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THE THREE AGES.

THE AGE OF IGNORANCE, 476, A. D.—1000, A. D.

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THE ages sustain to each other a necessary causative relation. To attempt to understand any age by selecting and singling it out from those which precede and succeed it, is at once unsatisfactory, and in the highest degree unphilosophical. In order to understand the dispositions and habits of a child, we must consider the nature and extent of the influences which have been acting upon him from the time of his birth, and not until we do so are we in a position to judge him intelligently. So it is in the case of events and ages. To form a just estimate of the character of an age, we must view it as a link in a great chain which runs parallel with the history of the race, or as a part in a grand whole which embraces humanity in all its successive stages of development. Each age is the natural outcome of that which precedes it, and must be regarded as an effect whose cause must be sought in the forces and influences which were in operation before its appearance. The same principle holds good in respect of persons as of ages and events. To associate any striking event with some person as its cause, is unjust and partial, and is a necessary result of a narrow-minded view of things. For instance, it is usual to regard Luther as the author of the great religious Reformation of the sixteenth century, and Francis Bacon as the great reformer in science and philosophy. The error of such a method of treating events is very evident. The Reformation of the sixteenth century was the inevitable result of influences which were in operation long before Luther appeared. Before his appearance upon the scene, the world had been preparing for him by a long course of previous training and discipline, so that when he came the age was ready to receive him, and to profit by his labours and instructions. The appearance of Francis Bacon, again, is associated in every mind with a remarkable change in the method of cultivating science and philosophy. Such a change, though visibly consummated in the age in which Bacon appeared, was the slowly acquired result of preceding centuries, during which influences were being continually exerted, and causes constantly